

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

[0045] Apparatuses and methods spread a towel from a load of towels. The towels are rectangular, such as hand, wash or beach towels. A trailing corner is first identified to isolate one short edge from another short edge. The entire towel is then transported from one side of a center line of a conveyor to another side. Once on the other side, an end of the towel is brought into contact with a moving belt. The moving belt tensions the towel by causing friction downwards or away from the direction the towel is being moved. The clamped corner is moved back to the other side of the center line and released on the conveyor. A pinch belt, such as a pinch belt on one side of the conveyor, conveys one end of the towel in a bunch. The conveyor conveys one portion of the towel while the pinch belt conveys the bunched portion. The conveyor conveys the towel off the end of the conveyor until a trailing corner is detected. A pinch roller is then placed against the conveyor to clamp the trailing corner. The pinch belt conveys the bunch to pinch rollers adjacent to the end of the conveyor. As a result, the towel is suspended by one corner off of the conveyor and an opposite short edge end of the towel is bunched and held in the pinch rollers. The short edge connected with the identified corner wall hangs from the conveyor in an exposed, straight position. A rotatable clamp grabs the edge at several locations. The towel is then suspended from the short edge and provided to one of various other processes, such as automated folding.